

"Of course not. But why do you ask?"

"Well,—I was only thinking. But how many do learn Greek?"

"Perhaps 20,000, according to the *Encyclopædia*."

"And how many learn English?"

"About 100,000,000."

"And how many '20,000's are there in 100,000,000."

"About 5,000 of course. But what of that?"

"Is that not the same as if every one in a town larger than Pictou should be compelled to spend his time in learning English words with Greek spelling, so that one boy should have the pleasure of seeing, when he comes to study Greek, that some of the English words he learned were spelled pretty much, although not exactly, like Greek?"

"You had better hold your tongue, Jim, you are a dangerous boy—to dare to question the proper way of spelling words, which I have by dint of careful labor for years become almost perfect in—in which I have attained more excellence than in any other subject. You conceited, radical little scamp!—keep mum, and spell *Phthisic*."

Had Jim been able to quote in retort, what a few years afterwards was stated by one of the most eminent scholars in the English world, A. H. Sayce, Professor of Philology in the University of Oxford, and author of the international text-book, "The Science of Languages," which of the two would have wilted? Here it is, "English spelling has become a mere series of arbitrary combinations, an embodiment of the wild guesses and etymologies of a prescientific age, and the hap-hazard caprice of ignorant printers. It is good for little else but to disguise our language, to hinder education and to suggest false analogies."

The late Connop Thirwall, Bishop of St. David's, author of the "History of Greece," and classical examiner at the Universities of Cambridge and London, says, "I look upon the established system of spelling (if an accidental custom may be so called), as a mass of anomalies, the growth of ignorance and chance, equally repugnant to good taste and common sense."

Listen to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, a statesman as well as a scholar: "I often think that if I was a foreigner, and had to set about learning English, I would go mad. I honestly could say I cannot conceive how it is that he learns to pronounce English, when I take into account the total absence of rule, method and system, and all the auxiliaries that people usually get when they have to acquire something difficult of attainment." Max Müller adds, "that a child who believes what he is taught in learning to spell the English language, will hereafter believe anything." While Lord Lytton, the novelist, dramatist and poet, with no lack of vim, uses these words: "A more lying, round-about, puzzle-headed delusion than that by which we confuse the clear instincts of truth in our spelling was never concocted by the father of falsehood. How can a system of education flourish that begins with so monstrous a falsehood which the sense of hearing suffices to contradict?"

Now both custom and the law force us to consume years of a boy's life in what is to him a pure effort of cram, without the first glimmer of philological interest which the older teacher fancies the boy must somehow feel because the teacher feels it himself. But it is impossible for the teacher to transfer his feeling to the boy until the boy has had some of the teacher's experience. But the spelling must be crammed before that is possible; the cramming of what must be to all young children arbitrary agglomerations of letters in many cases lacking the advantages of the Chinese characters.